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MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM
HIGH-STREAMER : 1

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1

The humanoid machine tottered in the air, then descended.

“Ah! A missile?!”

The woman in the cockpit kicked the control bar, frantically bringing the machine under control as the residential area below loomed on her monitor. Part of the machine touched an antenna standing on the roof of a house.

A flash sparked out from the thrusters on the main body of the humanoid machine. It rose barely. The antennae on the slate roofs of the nearby houses blew off as it finally overcame inertia and began an all-out ascent.

But shortly after that, a wire-guided missile followed the machine again with sharp accuracy. The humanoid unit’s manipulator swung widely as a streak of light ran from part of its hand-like assembly. With the missile’s guide wire severed, the nimble flier seemed to have shaken it off. The humanoid machine took off into the sky.

“I don’t have many places to land, do I?”

The woman in the cockpit let the machine she controlled lilt sideways to pick up a little altitude while she watched the wake of the missile.

The light of another missile appeared with a flash to her upper right.

“What?!”

Breaking away from the residential block, she flew into a area of mountains and forests and continued on, hiding herself in the treetops before setting down in a corner. The cockpit’s main monitor camera panned, searching for the enemy, displaying the surrounding landscape.

“Insurgents, just as I thought… How dare they attack from the city? Don’t they understand their situation?” she murmured, confirming the surrounding grove completely hid her machine. She removed her helmet and opened the hatch behind the main cockpit monitor. The console panel slid up, and a step appeared in the opening. Wearing only a pilot suit, she stooped down and exited the machine.

“…”

She surveyed her surroundings, her hand grasping the opened hatch, her demeanor not fierce but cautious. The explosion from the missile earlier had produced a strong breeze.

“Is there a hole in colony wall?”

She pulled out a cable fixed to the lip of the hatch and descended six meters to the ground below.

“It can’t be…”

That type of wire-guided missile was designed without the explosive power to cause that kind of accident on the ground or in the sky of a colony. In fact, it is a universal law.

Her high-performance pilot suit fits the form of her body’s contours, and beneath her helmet the woman’s hair is cut very short. Nevertheless, she carried herself with a certain feminine suppleness. Her face’s shape is quite pretty, though if her hair grew long it’d give her a heavy visage. A bandanna is tied around her forehead, betraying a bit of bad taste. Then again, fashion changes through every era, and even she won’t wear a bandanna forever.

Her name is Cunningham Joe. Only 20 years old, she is the pilot of

the humanoid machine called a mobile suit. Some situations in this world force people to pilot mobile suits even though they're only as old as she is.

"It'd be nice to think the talk of Char is true…" Cunningham muttered. "But are they wrong?"

Char Aznable. The question of the truth of his return raised the possibility the rumor was the work of EGM, an anti-Federation government movement with no connection to Char.

"You're late, Lieutenant."

Cunningham looked toward the sky. She could see the dim light between the trees but the town that should have been above it couldn't be seen. Around her, small birds scared by her mobile suit's landing finally started chirping again.

Girururu…

The sound of a nuclear fusion engine's tremendous power grew lower.

"Hm…?"

Recognizing the sound and shape of the machine passing the treetops, Cunningham opened a compartment near the ankle of her mobile suit. She drew out a pistol, popped a signal flare into it, and raised it to the sky and fired.

A short time later, another mobile suit of same type carefully landed next to Cunningham's machine.

The trees rustled.

2

“You’re all right I see. There doesn’t seem to be any damage to your suit.” Using the same cable she’d used, the other pilot descended to the ground.

“Huh?! CUNNINGHAM, GET DOWN!!” The man bellowed, dropping the cable.

Bratatata! A barrage of bullets raced towards Cunningham and the man who’d jumped down. He turned toward the sound of the gunfire through the ferns and trees.

As the flashes of fire retreated, visible in the man’s profile lingered a gentleness like that of a young boy, though his awareness was vividly sharp in his expression. Drawing his gun, he slipped from tree trunk to tree trunk.

Cunningham had taken cover behind her mobile suit’s foot. Emerging, she spotted the shadow of someone running toward the gunshots.

“You think you’re getting away?!” She was still angry from fending off the wire-guided missile.

With a searing hiss, a signal flare whizzed between the trees, its amber glow expanding with a bang.

“Ah!”

It seemed to have been a woman’s voice.

“This way!”

A man rushed into the smoke filled with gunfire.

“Guh…?!”

Although he was clutching his shoulder, he fell into a staggered stance instantly.

A loud report cracked from the heavy magnum in the man’s hand.

Pain seared his arm.

He heard a low, groaning “ahh” from across the smoke, and from another direction, even more light machine gun fire. Ignoring it, the man leapt through the fumes.

When battle was joined he seemed to naturally go out in front.

“You there! Don’t move!” resounded his voice in the amber smoke. “I can see you. Your friend best not move either. Toss your spare cartridges!” Pushed by the wind, the smoke slipped between the trees.

Cunningham put away her flare gun and drew her pistol.

“Lieutenant!” The man standing in the smoke gestured toward the trees where she was with his left hand.

“Wha…?”

Cunningham broke into a run. The amber fumes disappeared with the wind, brushing the tree trunks. She found the shadow of the person standing several meters in front of the man.

“My back, right.”

Cunningham ran toward his rear as instructed. Between the ferns she found a man groaning, a machine gun belt twisted around his wrist. “Lieutenant! He can’t resist!” she said, kicking away his gun.

“Good. Now what to do with them?”

The insurgent standing in front of the man shouted at once. “Even if you take me, even to Londo Bell, I won’t tell you anything about the organization!”

“Really…?”

Cunningham was at a loss for words.

“It’s good you have some fight in ya, but I still don’t plan on rushing this, Missy.” the man said.

“Alyona Paige! I’m Alyona Paige!” she cried out, slipping on a worn men’s blazer as she tucked her dirtied silk scarf around her neck beneath a turtleneck. She seemed not to like men addressing her that way.

“Sorry, I didn’t know your name or your age for that matter so I had to say it… Alyona Paige?” The man said giving a bitter smile. He was accustomed to this type of exchange.

“Lieutenant! Your wound!”

Cunningham noticed blood was oozing from the left shoulder of his pilot suit.

“It’s just a scratch.”

“But…” Cunningham thought back to when he called for her. He’d held up his left hand. She realized what a feat that was.

“To be expected of a veteran, right Lieutenant Amuro?” Cunningham asked.

“Amuro?!” When the two in front of the young woman heard that name, they spat in his direction. Though Amuro barely turned his face, Cunningham moved swiftly.

With a crack, Cunningham hit Alyona hard in the cheek and she staggered, allowing Cunningham to snatch the machine gun from her hand. Cunningham followed up with a swing of her leg, sweeping the girl off her feet and knocking her down in the ferns.

“Enough, Cunningham!”

“But Lieutenant!”

“Alyona, there’s a little something called common courtesy you give people.”

“I guess it can’t be helped we spit at Londo Bell! Besides, you’re Amuro! You’re Amuro Ray, aren’t you?!” Alyona screamed, her face red.

3

“Zedah, I’m heading out. I’ll leave the rest to you.”

“Please do, Captain.” The man called Zedah politely bowed his head toward the younger man.

Though Zedah Mandira had only one eye, its insight was sharp like no other.

“Tell me, is there something you’d like to say?” the young man called Captain asked from outside the door. He didn’t overlook Zedah’s demenor, his swallowing of words, his instant bowing of his head.

This young man…

Once known by the alias Char, The Red Comet of the Zeon Forces. Piloting a red Zaku mobile suit, he received that nickname after destroying Earth Federation Forces warships. After the collapse of Zeon, rumor had it he left the Earth sphere. That was Char Aznable. Another name for him was Casval Rem Deikun. And there was a man who’d fought with Amuro Ray when the anti-Earth Federation organization AEUG gained power in the Federation government. He’d been known as Quattro Bajeena, a young Caucasian officer with striking blonde hair.

The young man standing before Zedah Mandira was just like the man with three names. However, his hair was black tinged with red and his skin showed an Asian tan.

“What more is there to say?”

“Zedah, the moment you lowered your head you thought of something. Let’s hear it.”

“Sir… If Londo Bell’s Amuro Ray has come to investigate, will I be beaten to death?” Zedah didn’t think of what he truly wanted to say, coming up with something else instead.

“Hm… But what can you do as a guerilla?”

“Well, I’m not satified with things as they are now.”

“Then do as you like. However, this isn’t something I knew about, understood?”

“Haha… When you know yourself even if you are to die, that in itself is satisfaction.”

“A rather gracious thing to say.”

“I don’t believe the words Sieg Zeon to be those of the Zabis. I am merely glad to have been able to accompany you as I have. What’s more is that you’ve prepared yourself to inherit the name of Zeon Deikun…”

“Mm. However true, you’re to tell no one.”

“Of course.”

The young man called Captain may very well be Char. When Zedah answered with a grin, the man had already turned away from him.

The faint sound of the door closing was the only sound cutting the mood, but the door closed quietly, the short click of the mechanism the only sound.

“Hahaha! As expected of the Captain. That’s what I like about you! Guahahahahaha!”

Zedah made up his mind and laughed. His burly shoulders rocked up and down. The straight hair on his head never seemed to move, even when he laughed. His beard and his hair were the same light brown.